

## **The Agricultural Land Stewardship Program**

In October of 1995 Governor Wilson signed into law Senate Bill 275 (Chapter 931, 1995) creating the **Agricultural Land Stewardship Program (ALSP)**. This legislation was cosponsored by the California Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farmland Trust. The ALSP will serve to complement the Williamson Act by supporting long term protection of farmland through the conservation easement programs of local governments and nonprofit land trusts.

### **Brief Summary of the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program**

Within the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program (ALSP) is the creation of the Agricultural Land Stewardship Program Fund (ALSPF), the primary purpose of which is to support the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

The Department of Conservation is given the responsibility to adopt rules and regulations to develop and administer the ALSP. However, many details concerning eligibility and selection criteria are already included within the legislation.

Within the ALSP the Department shall not hold title to any land, but rather serve as a competitive grants mechanism supporting local government and qualified nonprofit land conservation programs.

To be eligible to receive funds for acquisition of conservation easements, a local government shall submit to the Department documentation of its adopted general plan that demonstrates a long-term commitment to agriculture and agricultural land conservation.

Money may be deposited into the Fund from the following sources: gifts; donations; proceeds from general obligation bonds; federal grants or loans; funds appropriated by the Legislature; or any other source.

Upon appropriation by the Legislature funds within the ALSP Fund may be utilized for agricultural conservation easements and land improvements, as defined.

A minimum of 90 percent of the funds available for grants are to be expended for the acquisitions of interests in agricultural land.

A maximum of 10 percent of the funds available for grants may be utilized for improvements of lands protected by agricultural conservation easements.

7/12/96

# Conservation Organizations - IP's (send meeting notice)

Ken Grott  
Department of Conservation ✓  
801 K Street, MS 13-70  
Sacramento, CA. 95814

Eric Vink / Jim Dunbar  
American Farmland Trust ✓  
1949 Fifth Street, Ste 101  
Davis, CA. 95616

Carol Arnold  
Coastal Conservancy  
1330 Broadway #8/100 ✓  
Oakland, CA. 94612

North Delta Conservancy (already  
see notices)  
P.O. Box 534  
Courtland, CA. 95615

Cass Elliott  
Yolo Land Conservation Trust ✓  
P.O. Box 1196  
Woodland, CA. 95776

*pend prog. 7/12.*

Mary Fleming  
Current Planning  
651 Pine Street, 4th Floor, N. Wing  
Martinez, CA 94553

Martin Vitz  
EBRPD  
2950 Peralta Oaks Court  
Oakland, CA 94605

Sally Shanks  
P.O. Box 408  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Gil Labrie  
P.O. Box 183  
Walnut Grove, CA 95690

Frank Noto  
GCA Strategies  
One Embarcadero Center, Ste 2500  
San Francisco, CA 94111

Clarksburg General Plan Committee  
P.O. Box 370  
Clarksburg, CA 95612

Martha Shaver  
Sperry Building  
146-148 West Weber Avenue  
Stockton, CA 95202

Earl Cooley  
Medford Island  
1 Medford Island  
Stockton, CA 95219

John Bento  
City of Rio Vista  
P.O. Box 745  
Rio Vista, CA 94571

Jim Elliott  
Elk Grove-Laguna Neighbors  
P.O. Box 727  
Elk Grove, CA 95759

Ann Schuyler  
Stockton Record  
P.O. Box 900  
Stockton, CA 95201

Linda Whitney  
2515 Capital Avenue  
Sacramento, CA 95816

land use within 1.5 miles, adjacent and on site; zoning: percentage of land zoned agriculture within 1.5 miles; compatibility/impact of uses: distance from village, environmental impact, compatibility with surrounding area, impact on historic, cultural features; urban and rural infrastructure: transportation available, availability of central sewer, agricultural support system; land use feasibility: soils suitability for on site disposal, size of site; and consistency with county or municipal plan.

In at least two California Bay Area counties, the voters have voted to take decisions about changes in General Plan designations for agricultural lands out of the hands of the Board of Supervisors. In both Napa County and Solano County, the voters decided that only the voters should have the ability to change designations for agricultural lands. The Solano County ordinance, adopted for a ten year period, sunsets in 1995. A new version of the ordinance will likely be before the voters in 1994.

#### 9. Easements.

Easements are used by several land trusts; nationally and locally, as a tool to protect agricultural land. An easement is acquired when a landowner gives up, by gift or through sale, one or more of the "rights" associated with a property. For example, a 400 acre farm in a zone which would allow parcel sizes down to 40 acres, could potentially be divided into 10 parcels, each could be sold and developed with a residence. The potential value of ten parcels can be determined thus indicating potential value associated with the farm. The landowner may choose to sell or donate that potential value, and keep the farm permanently at 400 acres and permanently in agricultural use. There are a couple of different methods for obtaining easements.

Monies can be given to the landowner, in exchange for restrictions on development of the land for residential or commercial uses. Continued agricultural uses of the property can thus be assured. In Marin County, conservation easements are funded by Open Space bond monies, by State bond monies (Prop 70), and by funding raising by a non-profit group, Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT). To date, MALT holds conservation easements on 25,140 acres of agricultural lands. The cost of the development easements is averaging \$1,000 per acre.

In areas with no funds to acquire easements, such as Napa County, conservation easements are donated and the value of the easement can be treated as a donation on the landowners taxes. Conservation easements are also sought as part of estates, as a gift in a will.

Easements may be partially purchased and partially donated; one Marin County landowner received a cash payment for a portion of the value of the easement, and donating to MALT the difference